

Department of State

§ 19.6-8

divorce the reason a pro rata share payment is not payable.

[46 FR 12958, Feb. 19, 1981. Redesignated and amended at 46 FR 18970, Mar. 27, 1981]

§ 19.6-6 Notification.

(a) *Notification to a principal.* Whenever PER/ER/RET receives from a former spouse or other eligible beneficiary—

(1) a court order which it deems qualified that requires payment to the beneficiary; or

(2) A final decree of divorce which it deems valid together with a request for a pro rata share payment—PER/ER/RET will send a copy of the document to the principal and a notice stating: (i) That PER/ER/RET deems the order qualified or the divorce decree valid, (ii) that payments will be made from the principal's account to the beneficiary and the effective date of such payments, (iii) the effect of such payments on the principal's retirement benefit. In the case of any court order with retroactive or immediate effect, and in the case of pro rata share payments, the amounts will be withheld from future payments to the principal but will not be paid to the beneficiary for 30 days from the notice date in order to give the principal an opportunity to contest the court order or the validity of the divorce.

PER/ER/RET will provide the former spouse or other beneficiary the same information, stating the exact amount that will be payable to the beneficiary and explaining how that amount was calculated.

(b) *Notification to a former spouse.* When PER/ER/RET receives from a principal—(1) a court order which it deems qualified that requires or forbids payment to a former spouse; or (2) a final decree of divorce which it deems valid without an accompanying court order—PER/ER/RET will send a copy of the document to the former spouse and a notice stating: (i) That PER/ER/RET deems the court order qualified or the divorce decree valid, (ii) that PER/ER/RET intends to honor the court decree or to make pro rata share payments because of the divorce, (iii) the effective date, exact amount, and method of calculation of any payments to the former spouse.

PER/ER/RET will provide the same information to the principal and will explain the effect any payment to a former spouse will have on the principal's retirement benefit.

§ 19.6-7 Decision.

(a) When a response has not been received by PER/ER/RET from a principal within the 30-day period under § 19.6-6a, payment will be made in accordance with the notification. When a response is received, the Chief, PER/ER/RET will consider the response. If it is shown that a court order is not qualifying or that a divorce is not valid under terms of the Act and these regulations, payment proposed in the notification will not be made. In such a case, PER/ER/RET will advise both parties of the basis for its decision and the alternative action, if any, that it proposes to take.

(b) If a principal responding to a notification under § 19.6-6a objects to the payment or other action proposed by the Department in the notification based on the validity of the court order or divorce decree, and the record contains support for the objection, PER/ER/RET will grant the principal 30 days to initiate formal legal action to determine the validity of the objection, will continue to delay payment to the former spouse or other beneficiary during this period, and will notify the beneficiary of this action. If evidence is submitted that formal legal action has been started within the 30-day period, the amount of any proposed payment to a former spouse or other beneficiary will continue to be withheld from any payments due the principal, but no payment will be made to the former spouse or other beneficiary until a judicial decision is rendered or agreement reached between the parties.

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§ 19.6-8 Allotment to beneficiary.

If a court order is not a qualifying court order because it directs or implies that payment to the beneficiary is to be made by the principal rather than the Secretary of State, the principal may make an allotment to the beneficiary from his/her annuity. An annuitant may also make an allotment

from his/her annuity to a previous spouse in the absence of a court order.

§ 19.6-9 Limitations.

(a) Retirement benefits are subject to apportionment by court order under § 19.6-1(a)(6) only while the principal is living. Payment of apportioned amounts will be made only to a previous spouse and/or the children of the principal. Such payments will not be made to any of the following:

- (1) Heirs or legatees of the previous spouse;
- (2) Creditors of either the principal or the previous spouse; or
- (3) Assignees of either the principal or the previous spouse.

(b) The amount of any court ordered payment may not be less than one dollar and, in the absence of compelling circumstances, shall be in whole dollars.

(c) In honoring and complying with a court order, the Department shall not be required to disrupt the scheduled method of accruing retirement benefits or the normal timing for making such payments, despite the existence of any special schedule relating to a previous spouse or other beneficiary.

(d) In cases where the court order apportions a percentage of the retirement benefits, PER/ER/RET will initially determine the amount of proper payment. That amount will only be increased by future cost-of-living increases unless the court directs otherwise.

§ 19.6-10 Liability.

(a) The Department shall not be liable for any payment made from retirement benefits pursuant to a court order if such payment is made in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

(b) In the event that the Secretary is served with more than one court order with respect to the same retirement benefits, the benefits shall be available to satisfy the court orders on a first-come, first-served basis.

(c) A previous spouse or other beneficiary may request that an amount be withheld from the retirement benefits of a principal or survivor of a principal which is less than the amount stipulated in a court order, or otherwise

scheduled to be paid to the beneficiary under this chapter. This lower amount will be deemed a complete fulfillment of the obligation of the Department for the period in which the request is in effect. See § 19.14.

§ 19.7 Spousal agreements.

§ 19.7-1 Purpose.

A spousal agreement may be used by both parties to establish an agreed-upon level of benefits to a spouse or a former spouse and to relieve the participant of responsibility for providing a higher level of benefits.

§ 19.7-2 Agreement with spouse.

(a) A spousal agreement between a participant and a spouse may waive or fix the level of a regular survivor annuity under § 19.11-3. If an agreement is filed, it will assure the spouse that the agreed-upon level of survivor annuity will be paid, irrespective of a future divorce provided the survivor meets the definition of "former spouse" in § 19.2(k). If an agreement is not filed, the participant's annuity will be reduced under § 19.10-2 to provide the maximum regular survivor annuity for the spouse, but in the event of a future divorce if the spouse meets the definition of "former spouse," that person will be entitled only to a pro rata share of the survivor annuity. An agreement under this paragraph may be filed with PER/ER/RET at any time prior to retirement (commencement of the principal's annuity).

(b) A spousal agreement between an annuitant and a spouse filed with PER/ER/RET before commencement of a supplemental annuity for recall service may waive a supplemental survivor annuity that would otherwise be provided for a spouse under § 19.10-6.

(c) A spousal agreement between a participant or former participant and a spouse may be filed with PER/ER/RET at any time in accordance with § 19.10-5 and provide for an additional survivor annuity for the spouse.

(d) A spousal agreement filed under paragraph (a), (b), or (c) remains valid and binding in the event of divorce if the spouse qualifies as a former spouse.